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WHO IS RUTH, WHAT IS SHE?

D.R.G. JEATTIE

If the reader will construe the proper noun and personal pronoun in the whimsical title of this paper as referring to the biblical book rather than to the heroine thereof, he will understand that the object of the exercise is to explore the question of the nature of the book of Ruth. That it tells a story goes without saying, a story which is so well-known that it is unnecessary here to summarize it. /1 But is there more to it than that? Did its author have in mind, when he composed it, a motive other than that of telling a story and, if he did, what was that motive?

It might be thought that it is well established that the origin of the book should be located in post-exilic Judah and that the author's purpose in writing it was to oppose the rigid attitude displayed by Ezra and Nehemiah in their policy of opposition to intermarriage between the people of Judah and those of neighbouring territories; that the story of Ruth offers a counterblast to this policy by submitting quietly that the Davidic dynasty originated in just such a mixed marriage as the reformers have outlawed. This opinion has found its way into the school textbooks and popular handbooks. 2/, but although it has been widely recorded it has by no means been as widely held as this might appear to imply. A glance at the literature available in commentaries and introductions will show that, when it is not actually opposed, it is often cited simply as a received opinion, while even those few who adhere to it offer little or no argument in support of the conclusion.

The main drawback to the theory is not just that the story contains no trace of polemic or propaganda but that it is essential to the argument that Ruth should be regarded as a foreigner, yet early in the story in the book's most famous passage, she avows her adherence to the religion of her mother-in-law and invokes the name of Yahweh. If Ruth is seen as a convert, her story, far from being understood as a polemic against the stringency of Ezra and Nehemiah, could be read as propaganda in support of their cause, saying in effect that marriage with foreigners is permissible if they first become proselytes.

This objection to the theory was put forward by

H.H.Rowley thirty odd years ago 3/ but, curiously, the very same argument was advanced to the opposite effect some one hundred and fifty years earlier. L.Bertholdt 4/ put it forward in 1816 as a modification to the suggestion of T.A. Dereser that it might have been a secondary motive 5/ of the author of Ruth to censure the intolerant attitude of his contemporaries towards foreigners. Bertholdt applied this idea specifically to the period of Ezra and Nehemiah, suggesting that the story could be read as teaching that marriage with foreigners is permissible if they first adopt the religion of Judah. Bertholdt thus seems to have presumed that Ezra would not even have tolerated marriages with proselytes, while Rowley presumed the opposite.

Throughout the period since Bertholdt's time both pro- and anti-Ezra theories, with variations on each theme, have been propounded from time to time. Lists may be drawn up of scholars who have opted for one or other of the possibilities open to those who assume that the book of Ruth was intended by its author to say something on the issue of mixed marriages; but the conflict between the two explanations is not to be decided by a majority vote. To one faced with the dilemma of deciding on which side of the debate the author's sympathies lay, the only safe solution is to doubt whether he had any involvement in the issue at all; to doubt, that is, whether the book was written as a tract for that particular time. This policy may have been present already in the mind of Bertholdt who -ironically, since he has been credited with the invention of the "anti-Ezra" theory- turned aside from the suggestion which we have already noted to offer as his own opinion that the book's purpose was to extend the obligation to marry a childless widow 6/ to kinsmen other than the nearest and the rights to such marriage to foreign women, even poor ones, who had embraced the Israelite religion.

Similar ideas have been expressed since Bertholdt's time 7/ but such an understanding of the purpose of the book is open to criticism on the grounds that it is extremely doubtful whether any element of obligation was involved in Ruth's second marriage. 8/ The present writer has elsewhere argued that no such obligation existed and other scholars have recently expressed similar views 9/, but even if the levirate principle is believed to be at work in the case of Ruth's second marriage it does not follow easily that the book must have been written for the express purpose of registering a legal precedent.



Here we touch on the fundamental problem which arises in connection with nearly all the explanations of the book's purpose which rely on the assumption that it was composed to serve a specific function at the time of its composition. The problem is that of demonstrating that the book was designed to serve some tractarian purpose for even though it may appear to the individual reader that the story teaches this or that lesson, or that it says something relevant to some historical situation or about some legal or moral issue, unless the point is explicitly made in the narrative it must remain questionable whether it was in the author's mind.

It is quite possible, for example, to compare the heroine of Ruth with another famous or infamous foreign widow of the OT, Athaliah. It may even be quite useful to do this as a homiletic exercise, but the conclusion drawn by Margaret B. Trook 10/, on the basis of such a comparison, that the story of Ruth as we have it 11/, was written, possibly by Jehoiada the priest, for the purpose of showing up Athaliah's wicked ways, is totally without warrant. Or, to return to an earlier topic, it is possible, perhaps even profitable, to compare the attitude of the book of Ruth and therefore of its author with that of Ezra and Nehemiah on the matter of mixed marriage, but this does not require that Ruth must necessarily have been written as a comment, whether favourable or unfavourable, on the policy of post-exilic extremists. If millions of readers have been able to read Ruth without a thought of Ezra or Athaliah or any of the various other presumed targets of the story there must remain a distinct possibility that its author wrote it without any such thought either.

There is perhaps one explanation of the purpose of Ruth which is able to evade the challenge presented above. This is that the writer's objective was the historical one of imparting information about the ancestry of King David. This explanation differs from the others which have been mentioned in that the story can be seen clearly to fulfil this objective; it can only be prevented from doing so by damage to its fabric. However it is not easy to demonstrate that the author's overriding concern was with history. I am inclined indeed to think that it was not.

I say this first of all because Ruth and Boaz are fairly remote ancestors of David, three generations back. If our author set out to record the history of David's family, we might have expected him to have told us something

of David's parents and grandparents instead of dealing only with one pair(out of four)of his great-grandparents. Of course this suggestion may be countered by the supposition that our author had no information about the intervening generations. Such a supposition however might in itself lead one to doubt whether the writer had historical information to communicate and whether his interest was primarily historical. One might ask whether it is realistic to presume that at some point in the history there would be surviving traditions about one pair of remote ancestors of King David when nothing was remembered about his parents or grandparents, especially when those remote ancestors appear not to have done anything sufficiently remarkable to warrant the preservation of their memory.

This line of reasoning may be speculative but there are firmer grounds for doubting the historicity of the story of Ruth, which is what the suggestion of an historical intention on the part of its author amounts to. The story is simply not made of the stuff of history. The doings of obscure country folk going about their daily lives do not normally concern the historian. Further, the story consists of a series of private conversations which cannot be considered historical even on the supposition that the book was written by one of its characters(a thesis which perhaps surprisingly has never been propounded), since none of them was party to all the conversations.

Perhaps the strongest indication that we are not dealing with history is the fact that the names of the various characters in the story may be taken as indicating literary artifice. To say this is not to dispute the plausibility or even the authenticity 12/ of these names as genuine personal names of the period in which the story is set. They are nowhere near as obviously artificial as are, say, those of Bunyan's characters. But the fact that the name of every actor in the story (including, if we may so put it, the man with no name) is capable of an interpretation which reflects the part played by its bearer - regardless of whether such interpretations represent truly the etymology of the names- suggests strongly that we are dealing with fiction and not history.

It remains possible however that some of the characters are historical while others are the invention of the story-teller and so each must be investigated. Mahlon, Chilion and Orpah can be easily dismissed as can the man



ed respectively with roots meaning "to be sick" and "to come to an end", are mentioned only in order that they, like their father, may die and leave widows. Orpah whose name is reminiscent of the word for "neck", turns back or, in Semitic idiom, turns her neck and goes home to Moab. The man with no name is not a real character but a man of straw introduced as a foil to Boaz; if the story had been composed in English he might have been named Jack Straw; the Hebrew story-teller has chosen to leave him nameless.

This leaves the two couples, Elimelech and Naomi, and Boaz and Ruth. The former couple I am inclined to treat as belonging to the story rather than to history. That is to say, I think they are fictitious characters. Elimelech's function in the story is simply to set it in motion and then to die leaving a widow. His name, which is well attested as an actual personal name although it does not appear elsewhere in the OT, has been described as "the one name in the Ruth story that seems incapable of being explained as having a symbolic meaning pertinent to the narrative", 13/ but I have suggested that it does indeed have relevance to the story. 14/ The man who bears a name meaning "My God is king" stands as a representative of the period when the only king of the people of Judah was Yahweh but, at the end of the tale, he is shown to have been an ancestor of the founder of their dynasty of human kings. Naomi, a one woman sub-plot in her progression from sweet to bitter and back again, is the one character the significance of whose name is explicitly drawn to the reader's attention even in translation. When Naomi remarks to the women of Bethlehem that her name is inappropriate to her circumstances and that Mara would be a better one, the translator is forced to point out to his readership that Naomi means "sweet" and Mara "bitter". Is it possible that the writer, by making this play of names, is quietly inviting his audience to look carefully at the other names too? Whatever answer the reader of the present paper may give to this question, we must move on to consider the central characters, Boaz and Ruth.

In the third and fourth chapters of Ruth where he conceives and carries out the plan which results in the anonymous kinsman's abdication of his rights to Ruth's and Naomi's property, Boaz displays the characteristics inherent in his name which, on the basis of the Arabic cognate, may be taken to mean "shrewd, sharp-witted"; he might thus be judged to be a fictitious character. He appears agai



briefly, in 1 Chronicles ii 11f., in David's genealogy, and might on that account be judged historical. Here, for the first time, we are confronted directly with the problem of deciding on the historicity of the characters in the story. While the general principle enunciated above—that it would appear unlikely that all the characters were historical individuals—holds good, it is not impossible that the author has woven his tale around some historical persons—say, Ruth and Boaz, or even Boaz alone—capitalizing on the meanings apparent in their names and surrounding them with other characters of his own invention.

Whatever the case, the problem of procedure may be reduced to a choice between presuming all the characters to be historical unless grounds for thinking otherwise can be found and presuming them fictitious in the absence of any reason for judging them historical. Since the former possibility has already been breached by the observation that it seems unlikely that an entire family should have existed with names which lent themselves so easily to the formation of the story, the present writer would opt for the second choice. In any event, since the work is obviously a story, this seems the more sensible policy. Only in the case of Boaz, amongst the characters considered so far, has any reason been found for thinking that he might be historical, and that is the appearance of his name in 1 Chronicles ii 11f. This however I do not find to be compelling evidence. It is possible that the name Boaz was borrowed, so to speak, from Chronicles but the character is still the creation of the author of Ruth. There is also another possibility, which cannot be excluded and which certainly should not be overlooked: that the Chronicler obtained the name from the story of Ruth. 15/ The only possible conclusion on Boaz is that while a case may be presented for his historicity, the verdict must be "Not Proven".

What of Ruth herself? Her name—even if it is a Moabite name we may expect that its etymology will be apparent to the Hebraist—seems clearly to be based on the root rwh, which conveys the idea of "satiation"; in the story she may be said to "satisfy" Naomi and Boaz with her kindness and generosity, but is she historical? On the basis of the principle I have espoused, I am inclined towards treating her as fictitious, if only be-

since I do not see any evidence for seeing her as historical. In this I dissent from the widely held opinion that Ruth's name and nationality, at least, must be historical data on the grounds that no writer could have attributed to David a Moabite ancestress unless there was a tradition to that effect, which is to say, unless it was true. This opinion is rarely explained but, as far as I can see, it is based on a supposition derived from Deuteronomy xxiii 4 (v3 in the English versions). But to infer from this text that Moabite ancestry carried a stigma and that David's Moabite ancestry must therefore be fact seems to me unsound.

Any argument about the historicity of Ruth as an ancestress of David, based on Deuteronomy xxiii 4 would be valid only if Deuteronomy xxiii 4 can be understood as a genuine law excluding Ammonites and Moabites from the Jerusalem cult and antedating the composition of Ruth. Quite regardless of the date of composition of Ruth - a question which unfortunately cannot be opened in the context of the present essay - it is in my judgment doubtful whether the verse can be so understood. Leaving Ruth out of consideration there is still an Ammonite woman in the Davidic dynasty, Maamah, mother of Rehoboam (1 Kings xiv 21). So, if Deuteronomy xxiii 4 is taken seriously as a law, it is implied that at the least all the members of the Davidic dynasty from Rehoboam to Uzziah 17/ inclusive were not legitimate members of the religious community of Judah. The very notion is so ludicrous that it may confidently be asserted that, whatever its original significance, Deuteronomy xxiii 4 cannot be a Judaean law from the period of the monarchy. Enquiry into the origin of the passage is beyond the scope of the present paper and is for our present purpose immaterial. If it is not a genuine law of the Jerusalem-centred cult, no argument can be based on it about Ruth's historicity. So she, too, must be pronounced fictitious for lack of any evidence to the contrary.

It must be admitted that two undoubtedly historical personages - Jesse and David - are named in the book, although the genuineness of the Davidic genealogy as an integral part of the story has been questioned. The long genealogy from Perez to David which brings the text of Ruth to its conclusion is almost universally regarded as not properly belonging to the book. These last five verses add nothing of value to the story (the descent of David from Boaz has already been stated: if Boaz is



a descendant of Perez, so what?) and, with their dry recitation of one generation after another, are so markedly different in mood from the rest of the book that they can be easily isolated as an appendix which has been constructed from 1 Chronicles ii 5-12 and included here as supporting evidence for the statement of v17.

But it is not this concluding genealogy which prompts the question of the integrity of the Davidic connection. This is raised by iv 17, where it might be thought that the name Obed does not sit easily in the sequence "the neighbours gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi'; they called him Obed", inasmuch as there seems to be no connection between the two parts of the sentence. It might be thought, on the basis of the structure of the verse and a comparison of it with similar passages elsewhere 18/, that the words of the women ought to be reflected somehow in the name they gave to the child; that their words, in fact, should provide an explanation for the child's name. Since this is patently not so, many have concluded that Obed cannot have been the name of Ruth's child in the original form of the story. A masculine form of Naomi, such as Naaman, or something like Ben Noam, it has been suggested, would be necessary to satisfy the requirements of the context, and it is supposed that at one time the story ended with the child's being given some such name, the substitution of the name Obed and the addition of the words "he was the father of Jesse, the father of David" being a secondary development designed solely to identify the characters of the story with David's ancestors. On this view then Obed is the actual name of David's grandfather while all the characters in the story proper are fictitious.

On the other hand, the argument from the structure of iv 17 is not conclusive. The verse is not precisely identical in form with any of the other verses in the OT where a child's name is explained by a saying of the person who bestows the name. It is not necessary, therefore, to presume that the purpose of Ruth iv 17 was to explain the name Obed. Rather might the verse be interpreted as explaining why it was the women of the neighbourhood who gave the child his name: because they were rejoicing at the implications for their old friend Naomi of the birth of the child. The significance of the name Obed ("server" 19/) is already given obliquely in v15 in the wishes expressed by these same women to Naomi,

old age".

That the name Obed is of significance in the story is a positive argument in favour of seeing the name as an integral part of the story and not a secondary insertion. Now we must ask the question, Is Obed an historical figure? On the face of it he should stand in company with Boaz as potentially historical because of his appearance in the genealogy of Chronicles. He is widely accepted as historical on that basis, but the same caveat must be entered here as was entered with respect to Boaz. Indeed the present writer must confess he is even more suspicious of Obed's historicity than he was of that of Boaz. This suspicion is founded on the feeling- it is no more than that- that the function of Obed in the story is to serve as a buffer or damper to ease the transition in the narrative from the fictitious characters of the story proper to the historical ones, Jesse and David. My conclusion therefore is that Obed, like the actors in the story, is most likely to be fictitious.

The Davidic connection which is made by means of Obed I take to be an integral part of the story for two reasons. The first I have already expressed above when I suggested that the name Elimelech contains a hint of how the story will end. To put it the other way round, the mention of David at the end gives some point to having Elimelech at the beginning. 20/. The second, and perhaps more substantial, reason is that the naming of David in the very last word makes a fine strong ending to the story. Just imagine the feeling of anti-climax which would be produced if the story ended with the birth of some totally inconsequential character called Ben Noam, or whatever!

Not the least important aspect of the quiet concluding sentence, with its air of being almost an afterthought, a postscript to the story, is that it guarantees the truth of the story to its audience by its naming, its bringing into itself, this important historical personage. This is not to say that the assurance thus offered should satisfy the scientific enquirer, for the truth of the historian and that of the story-teller are two different things. We learn somewhere early in childhood that a "true" story is in some mysterious way vastly superior to one that is "just made up". A little later we learn that even a "true" story is rarely true. The point



can perhaps be illustrated by citing a specimen from our own folklore. The story of how Finn McCool created Lough Neagh and the Isle of Man simultaneously by scooping up a sod and throwing it at a rival giant in England, ends with the assurance that "if you could put the Isle of Man back into Lough Neagh it would be a powerful fit". It would be nothing of the kind, but the knowledge that the assertion is not true does not detract from the impact which is created in the story by this apparent appeal to objective fact as testimony to the truth of the tale.

Perhaps a better example, certainly a closer analogy to Ruth, may be found in John Buchan's novel The Path of the King, in which the descendants of a Norse chieftain, who are themselves ignorant of their ancestry, are identified to the reader at various periods of history by the possession of a gold ring passed down through the generations. The end of the "Path" is marked by the loss of the ring while it is being used to weight a fishing-line by the young Abraham Lincoln. Thus the yarn proclaims itself a "true story", although no one would accept it as history. So, I would suggest, the genealogy from Ruth and Boaz to David assures the reader that the story of Ruth is a true story, but whether he accepts that assurance is entirely up to him.

In discussing the historicity of the story of Ruth and its characters we may appear to have diverged a little from our main theme. But this discussion is germane to the question of the author's motive in composing the story, for if there are no grounds for thinking the story to be essentially historical, it can hardly be said that it was written for an historical purpose, unless the word historical in this context be understood as meaning nothing more than story-telling.

We have been unable to move very far from our starting-point. That the book of Ruth is a story, is indisputable. That it is something more, whether that something be history or propaganda or even both, is an assumption which has often been made but for which there is no evidence. In the last hundred years or so a number of scholars have been content to accept it as a story told for its own sake. Gunkel and Gressmann are usually acknowledged as the leaders of this trend but U. Robertson Smith had already expressed similar sentiments in 1896. 21/.

This view of the story does not mean that it

It is a considerable variety of other (non-literary) values. Lessons have been read into it, from the rules of conduct—like the carrying of the Sundry (or, properly, Sundry) scroll, for example. 22/ For which ancient Rabbis have given scriptural authority, to the warning, suggested by the scroll, that men should be "on their guard against beautiful, clever women who are set on carrying out their designs". 23/ He may also mention here the theological interpretations of recent years which find the story to be concerned with the workings of divine providence. 24/

Such lessons may certainly be derived from the story, with greater or lesser degrees of exegetical integrity, in any particular instance, but it cannot reasonably be said that the author's sole purpose in creating the story, was to advocate any, or all of them, or even that he had any of them in mind. It can, on the contrary, be said with assurance that he never thought of some of them. There is however one moral theme which, it seems to me, it is impossible to separate from the warp and woof of the story, and which must have been in the author's mind. Here we may recall what is probably the oldest answer of all to the question of the purpose of the book of Ruth.

"R. Zeira said: This scroll tells us nothing of cleanliness or of uncleanness, either of prohibition or permission. For what purpose then was it written? To teach how great is the reward of those who do deeds of kindness". 25/

R. Zeira who lived in the third century clearly perceived that the theme of unselfishness and generosity is one which pervades the book. These qualities are found in all three major characters, who might be said to vie with one another in their attempts to outdo each other's generosity. First Naomi insists that her daughters-in-law should not share her misfortune, but Ruth resists with the declaration of love for which she has been immortalized. Not only this, but she works in the fields to support her mother-in-law who in turn lays plans for Ruth's security and happiness in marriage to Boaz. Boaz welcomes Ruth to his land and goes beyond what might reasonably have been expected of him in allowing her to glean by making sure that his harvesters leave plenty of grain behind for her. Ruth responds to this generous treatment by offering herself to Boaz at the threshing-floor. Boaz not only marries Ruth but ensures through his activity in the public sphere that the property of her previous husband is not



lost to her. Finally, the son of Ruth and Boaz is dedicated to the support of Naomi in her old age.

As a set of illustrations for a sermon on going the second mile the book of Ruth is unsurpassable, but I do not go all the way with D. Zeira. I stop short of suggesting that the story was written purely for the purpose of preaching. The author was no mere moralist and his composition no dry didactic tale. The gentle unostentatious way in which the virtue of the characters is allowed to emerge from the report, without comment by the narrator, of their words and actions is just one of the features which mark the story as literature and its author as an artist.

### Notes

1. It may be said here that the received version of the story as it is found in the English versions of the Bible- and indeed in all except the consonantal Hebrew text and one obscure Arabic version- is flawed at one point. In Ruth iv 5 where Boaz is commonly presented as informing the anonymous relative of his duty to marry Ruth, he should rather, as the present writer has argued elsewhere, be understood to inform the other man of his intention of marrying Ruth. See D.R.G. Beattie, "Kethibh and Qere in Ruth iv 5," VT XXI (1971) pp.490-494, and below, note 2.

2. See, for example, William Neill, Can we trust the OT? (1979), p.94f.

3. H.H. Rowley, The Servant of the Lord<sup>2</sup> (1965), p.173. His paper "The marriage of Ruth" was first published in Harvard Theological Review XL (1947)

4. L. Bertholdt, Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die sämtlichen kanonischen und apokryphischen Schriften des Alten und Neuen Testaments (1812-19), V.2, p.2356f.

5. I have been unable to locate a copy of Dereser's work-cited by Bertholdt as Die heilige Schrift des AT von Brentano fortgesetzt von Dereser, Thl.2,1, F., S.232- so do not know what he thought was the primary purpose of Ruth.

6. Bertholdt spoke of "obligatory marriage" (Pflichtehe), doubtless in order to avoid producing the self-contradictory proposition that the levirate obligation, which by de-

could ever be applied to anyone else.

7. E.F. Driver, Introduction to the Literature of the OT<sup>2</sup> (1891), p.421, thought it not impossible that "it was" a collateral didactic aim of the author to inculcate the duty, of marriage on the part of the next of kin with a widow left childless".

8. The obligation which is commonly thought to have been imposed on the anonymous Kinsman depends on the reading of the verb in Ruth iv 5b as second person singular ("You must take", or the like) following the gere of the Masoretic text, but the kethibh is first person singular. A choice obviously has to be made between the two readings thus provided in the Hebrew text. I have found several reasons for preferring the kethibh as the original reading (see the article cited in note 1, above); no one has ever given any reason for preferring the gere and I have not been able to find one. The reading of the kethibh has been accepted for different, though as yet unspecified, reasons by J.M. Sasson, "Ruth III: A Response, JBOT 5(1972)p.49.

9. At least insofar as they deny the presence of levirate marriage in Ruth. See R. Gordis, "Love, Marriage and Business in the book of Ruth", in H.N. Bream et al. (eds), A Light Unto my Path: OT Studies in honor of Jacob M. Myers (1974), p.249; J.M. Sasson, "The Issue of 'Ge'ullat' in Ruth", JBOT 5 (1972)p.52; A.A. Anderson, "The Marriage of Ruth", JSB 23 (1972)p.183.

10. Margaret C. Brook, "The Book of Ruth: A New Solution", Journal of Bible and Religion 16, pp.155-160.

11. She saw the book as having been composed in two stages. An "Old Story" from the time of the judges "registers the precedent allowing the next of kin, in case of financial incapacity, to pass on his heavy duty to a wealthier kinsman". The second version is the story we know.

12. E.F. Campbell, Jr, Ruth, Anchor Bible 7(1975), p.59, insists that the names are authentic early Northwest Semitic names.

13. Campbell, op.cit. p.52

14. D.S.G. Beattie, "Ruth III", JBOT 5(1972)p.46.

15. It will be suggested below that the long genealogy of Ruth iv 12-22 was taken from Chronicles but this borrowing would have taken place at a date much later than the



composition of Ruth and the thesis does not affect the possibility that the second half of it was built, in the first place, from material in Ruth.

16. Most recently expressed by A.A.Anderson,op.cit.p.172

17. That is, if the expression "tenth generation", in the first half of the verse, is taken at its literal value. If it should be understood as an idiomatic term meaning "in perpetuity"-and the second half of the verse explicitly excludes Ammonites and Moabites "for ever", in any case-then all the Davidic kings after Solomon must be viewed as excommunicates.

18. J.Gray, Joshua, Judges and Ruth (1967),p.403, refers to the birth narratives of Gen.xxv and xxxviii. O.Eissfeldt, The OT:An Introduction (1965)p.479, compares the naming of the sons of Jacob, Genesis xxix and xxx. Eissfeldt later argued that the name of Obed is an integral part of the book of Ruth (Wahrheit und Dichtung in der Ruth-Erzählung; Sitzungsbericht der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Phil.-hist.Kl., 110,4 (1965),23-28).

19. I choose this word rather than the more usual "servant" to indicate the distinction between the personal name, or participle, Obed, and the common noun Obed, "servant, slave".

20. Campbell, op.cit.p.169, offers a similar reason for taking v.17b as an integral part of the story.

21. W.Robertson Smith, "Ruth", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th edition.

22. Shab.113b. For further examples see D.R.G.Beattie, Jewish Exegesis of the book of Ruth (1977),pp.203-210.

23. H.Gunkel, Reden und Aufsätze (1913),p.89

24. R.M.Hals, The theology of the book of Ruth (1969) p.74f.; Wesley J.Fuerst, The Books of Ruth, Esther...etc., (1975),p.30.

25. Ruth Rabbah II 14. The translation is that of L. Rabinowitz, The Midrash (1939).

C.E.B.Cranfield: A Study of 1 Thessalonians 2

The contents of 1 Thessalonians 2 bear a close resemblance to those of the preceding chapter; but in chapter 2 there is a considerable increase of detail, and a greater intensity of feeling comes to expression. Both chapters are concerned with the ministry fulfilled in Thessalonica by Paul and his colleagues, Silvanus and Timothy, and with the existence there of a young church as its result. Both chapters strike the note of thanksgiving to God; but, while in chapter 1 Paul's 'We give thanks to God' /1 comes at the beginning, following immediately upon the epistolary pre-script, in chapter 2 the words 'we also thank God' occur near the middle (v13). We shall take the liberty of making Paul's thanksgiving in v13 our starting-point and then dealing with its sequel in vv14-16, which includes two very puzzling and difficult verses (v15f), before considering the long paragraph consisting of vv1-12. We shall then conclude by taking a quick look at vv17-20, which, though they are closely connected with chapter 3, throw a valuable further light on vv1-12.

I

Verse 13 declares that Paul and his colleagues- it seems more natural here to understand the first person plural in this way (cf. 1.1) than to take it as a writer's plural or any other kind of plural used of a singular subject- 'thank God without ceasing'. /2 The reason for this constant thanksgiving is indicated in the latter part of the verse: /3 'that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe'.

There are several details of exegesis to be considered before we attempt to draw out the significance of this as a whole: (1) The Greek word represented by 'message' can denote the ability to hear, the act of hearing, that with which one hears (i.e., the ear), that which is heard, so a report, message (cf. its use in the Isaiah quotation in Rom. 10.16). The RV supplement, even the word, is not necessary.

For 'from us the word of the message, even the word of God we might well substitute something like 'the word of God



spoken by us'; (ii) that Paul used paralambainein ('receive') here to denote external reception as opposed to something inward denoted by dechesthai ('accept') does not seem to us very likely, since paralambainein, which is a technical term in the NT for receiving teaching or tradition (cf., e.g., Mk 7.4; 1 Cor. 11.23; 15.1,3; Gal. 1.9,12; Phil. 4.9), does not naturally exclude the thought of inward acceptance but rather includes it (see, in particular, 1 Corinthians 15.1 and 3). But the way in which the two verbs are used in this verse does suggest that, while paralambainein may be taken to bear its ordinary meaning embracing both the external and the internal aspects, dechesthai does specially bring out, and focus attention on, the element of inward personal decision; (iii) The Greek contains no explicit equivalents of the 'it' and 'as' of the RV. It is therefore possible to translate: 'when ye received..., ye accepted not the word of men, but....the word of God'. Paul's point would then be that, when the Thessalonians had received the Gospel message, they had received no mere human word but had received nothing less than the word of God himself. Rigaux insists that the Greek word should be taken in this way. /4 But against this it must be said that 'when ye received the word....of God, ye accepted...the word of God' seems decidedly tautological; that, in this interpretation, the clause 'as it is in truth' seems redundant; that the use of dechesthai with two accusatives /5 in the sense 'accept someone (or 'something') as something' can be paralleled (cf., e.g., Thucydides 1.43, where it is used of accepting someone as an ally); and that the presence of 'as it is in truth' tells positively in favour of this 'accept....as' interpretation. We conclude that the Latin Vulgate's insertion of illud and ut, which the RV and RV have followed, gives Paul's meaning correctly; (iv) It is not certain whether the antecedent of 'which' is 'the word of God' (in Greek the relative pronoun here is masculine, as are both logos ('word') and theos ('God')); the Vulgate and some of the Fathers understand the relative as referring to God; /6 but we are inclined to think that it is rather more natural to take it to refer to the word. /7 But, substantially, there is not a great difference of meaning involved.

Verse 13 indicates two things about the people who make up the young church in Thessalonica. These two things are, if we understand the verse correctly, that they have recognised the message of the Gospel for what it truly is, and have received it as such, namely, as the authoritative word

of God; and that this word of God is now working in them, having definite consequences in their lives. The questions which this verse puts to us, as we seek to hear in it God's word for us, are obvious enough: Are those marks of true churches and of true Christians, to which it points, characteristic of the congregations to which we belong and of ourselves? Have we really received the gospel message as the authoritative word of the eternal God - as what it truly is, and not as mere human teaching, as a philosophy or as an ideology or as something for which, as part of our cultural inheritance, we feel a certain sentimental attachment, perhaps rather condescending, perhaps always diminishing? And is the word of God really working in us effectually? Does it make a significant difference to the way we live our lives? Could we honestly say that it is - in some measure at least - moulding our daily lives, disciplining us, curbing our egotism? Does it, for example, effect what we do with our money or the way we vote in parliamentary elections?

## II

Verse 14 supports the latter half of v13 (note the 'For') by referring to the fact that the Christians of Thessalonica have followed the pattern of those in Judaea, in that, as the Christians of Judaea have suffered persecution at the hands of their fellow-Jews, so they have been persecuted by their own fellow-countrymen. To share Christ's reproach, to be hated for his sake, this is another mark of the true church and the true Christian. We may compare the words of John 15.19f: 'because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.... If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you'. The words of William Temple, 'Not all that the world hates is good Christianity; but it does hate good Christianity and always will', /8 are wise words and true. If our lives are even just beginning to be under the discipline of the gospel, they are bound to be in collision with the values and ways of the society around us.

## III

Verses 15 and 16 are incidental. Having mentioned the Jews, that is, the unbelieving Jews, in the course of re-



ferring to what the Thessalonian Christians have suffered from their fellow-countrymen. Paul adds by the way some statements concerning them. With 'who...killed the Lord Jesus' we may compare Acts 2:23; 3:15; 4:10; 7:52; also Mark 12.7f and its parallels. Paul is not forgetting the part played by the Romans, but he is underlining the special guilt of God's own chosen people. With 'and the prophets' compare, among other passages, Matthew 23:29-37; Mark 12:5; Acts 7:52; Romans 11:3. Of the next four charges levelled against the unbelieving Jews, the first is distinguished by the use of a further aorist participle in the Greek (they have fiercely persecuted /9 Paul and other preachers of the gospel), the other three /10 by the use of present participles expressing continuity. The clause which the RV renders, 'to fill up their sins always', is understood by some as final, /11 by others as consecutive. It is difficult to decide between these alternatives. If we take the clause to be consecutive, we may understand the thought to be that their always completing the full measure of their sin results from the rebelliousness against God which has just been described. If, however, we take the clause as final, we may understand the thought to be that God's purpose behind all this rebelliousness of his people was that they should always complete the full measure of their sins. The expression 'fill up their sins' is biblical (cf. the Septuagint version of Genesis 15:16; Daniel 8:23; 2 Maccabees 6:14f). /12 Though the precise sense it has here is not easy to determine, the general sense which we take it to have will become plain from our discussion of the last sentence of this paragraph (v16b).

It is this sentence which is the most difficult part of vv15 and 16. It is often taken to be a declaration that there is now no hope for the Jews. So the New English Bible renders the Greek: 'and now retribution has overtaken them for good and all'. If this 'for good and all' really gives the true meaning of the Greek, then Paul's view of the situation of the Jewish people certainly did undergo a most drastic change between the writing of 1 Thessalonians and Romans 11. But the Greek phrase eis telos is patient of more than one interpretation. It can mean, for example, 'at least', 'finally', 'to the uttermost'. The most likely meaning of the sentence as a whole in view of what Paul says elsewhere is, in our opinion, that God's wrath has already

come upon the Jews to the uttermost in the event of the Cross. In that event the disobedience of God's people reached its climax, and God showed it up in its true character with final and absolute clarity. Moreover, in the act of taking upon himself the full burden of his wrath against sinners, He allowed men to see its awful reality. /13 Paul knew full well that the judgment of the Cross was God's judgment not of the Jews only but of all men, Jews and Gentiles alike. But here he refers specially to the Jews, underlining their special guilt as the people of God. The lesson which Christians ought to draw from v16b is most certainly not an encouragement of any anti-semitism to which they may be inclined but a reminder of the fact that the Christian church shares with the Jewish people a specially exposed and dangerous position in relation to God's judgment - 'to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required'. And how like the unbelieving Jews of Paul's time we Christians often are! Could it not often be fairly said of us that we 'please not God', and sometimes that, far from being serious about our missionary task, we prevent, in one way or another, those who would hear the gospel from hearing it so as to be saved?

#### IV

We now turn to vv1-12. They tell us a very great deal about the ministry of Paul and his colleagues in Thessalonica which lay behind the existence of the young church to which this letter is addressed. They deserve a much more detailed and careful study than we shall have space for here; for they do, in fact, provide an outline for what could be a truly notable and worthwhile course of lectures in pastoral theology, and it is on this aspect of them that we shall specially focus attention.

It is perhaps not quite as certain as Rigaux takes it to be /14 that eisodos (RV: 'entering in') is used in v1 (and also in 1:9) in its literal sense of 'entrance' or 'visit'; but even if we take Rigaux's judgment for granted and ignore the possibility that eisodos is here used metaphorically,

/15 it is still hardly to be disputed that this chapter as a whole indicates clearly that Paul and Silvanus and Timothy had found an entrance to the Thessalonians' hearts - had shown themselves credible as messengers of God, possessed of that credibility which only God Himself can give but



without which no true pastoral work can even be begun, let alone sustained and brought to fruition. (And to say of someone that he or she is a credible minister of the gospel of Christ, in the sense that he or she is someone who can be - and, by God's gracious working, at any rate to a considerable extent, deserves to be - taken seriously as a minister of Christ's Gospel, is surely as high a praise as one can confer on a fellow-human being.)

In v2 Paul refers to the fact that, in spite of the sufferings and humiliating treatment which he and his colleagues had had to bear in Philippi (see Acts 16:19ff), they had 'waxed bold in our God to speak' to the Thessalonians 'the gospel of God', even though in Thessalonica too they met with opposition ('in much conflict' - see Acts 17:5ff). The word for us to mark especially here is parrēsiazesthai (RV: 'wax bold'). The substantive parrēsia (its derivation is from the combination of the words for 'all' and 'speaking') was used to denote that freedom of speech which the Athenians claimed as their right and of which they were greatly proud. /16 It was characteristic of a democracy. In the NT the word's range of meanings includes openness in speech, frankness, publicness (publicly, in public), boldness, fearlessness, confidence, joyful confidence. /17 So here in v2 eparrēsiasthēte is an affirmation that they had proclaimed the gospel of God fearlessly and confidently. Contrast the timidity, the lack of confidence, the hesitancy, by which so often the preaching in Britain at the present time is characterized. It is a rare experience to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed with confidence and joy and without apology, that is, with the parrēsia of which it is altogether worthy.

Verse 3 contains three interesting negative phrases. The first of them is 'not of error'. The noun planē denotes a going astray from the truth, a state of being misled. It corresponds not to the active verb planan ('lead astray') but to the passive planasthai. For Paul it is clearly a matter of great importance whether the source of his exhortation is the truth of the gospel or error, that is, the condition of being astray from that truth. This phrase puts a number of questions to us. To mention just some of them - Do we want to have, or would we rather escape the embarrassments involved in having that moral and intellectual integrity which compels a person to care seriously about

the distinction between truth and falsehood? Are our churches and their ministers at present perhaps so bewildered and confused as to be scarcely conscious of the need to distinguish the truth of the gospel from the fashionable falsehoods of the day? How far is an anti-intellectual prejudice characteristic of our churches? And, if it is, how far is it a reaction against a barren pseudo-intellectualism which has obscured the fact that theology has to do with obedience, that the truth of God is only known when we begin to 'do' it (cf. John 3:21; 1 John 1:6)? The second negative phrase is 'nor of uncleanness'. While the word akatharsia is often used of sexual immorality in particular, it can also denote quite generally the moral condition of the pagan world. We need to ask ourselves how far we could truly claim that the source of our exhortation is unadulterated by the manifold corruptions of the pagan society in which we live.

The last of the three negative phrases of v3 is 'nor in guile'. That Paul should be anxious to dissociate himself as strongly as possible from the many charlatans who wandered about in his day claiming to be purveyors of philosophical or religious wisdom is understandable enough, and it is quite likely that he added 'nor in guile' with this purpose in mind. But guile is certainly not a special peculiarity of the ancient world; and we should be wise to consider whether Paul's phrase is not relevant to the position of those who, having ceased to believe those things which in their ordination they have solemnly affirmed that they believed, lack the honesty to resign their ministries (We do not, of course, mean to suggest that every passing doubt or depression or even the experience of a prolonged period of doubt constitutes a proper ground for resigning one's ministry) and so deceive their fellow-men and abuse their trust.

We may take together vv4b and 6a (in what follows we shall have to pass over much that is interesting and important). While there is a right pleasing of men which is a Christian duty (see, e.g., Romans 15:2f), there is a pleasing of men which is opposed to pleasing God, and this is something which a Christian minister should eschew. So Paul writes: 'not as pleasing men, but God'. And similar is the general purport of v6a ('nor seeking glory of men, neither from you, nor from others'). The bearing of these two halves on our present-day church life is surely too clear to need exposition.



Verse 5 contains two denials. In support of the former ('neither at any time were we found using words of flattery') Paul appeals to the Thessalonian Christians' own knowledge ('as ye know'); in support of the latter ('nor a cloke of covetousness') he calls God to witness ('God is witness'). The reason for this difference is probably that, while flattery is something which is usually pretty obvious (to the onlookers at least - to the person flattered it is, of course, often not at all obvious), the sort of thing to which the latter denial refers is something which it is much more difficult for human perception to discern. The essence of logos kolakeias ('word of flattery') is the saying of things designed to gratify the vanity of someone with the intention of gaining some advantage for oneself. It is a very common vice of the clergy which, in situations of extreme boredom, provides much comic relief for any onlooker who is sufficiently hard-hearted to be able to put out of his head the thought of the serious inward damage which the flatterer is doing to himself - and quite often also to the person flattered. The gain which the clerical flatterer seeks is, of course, often simply general popularity (undiscerning congregations like to be flattered and like those who flatter them!); but it may also be in favour in high places and the preferments and promotions which may result therefrom. The Greek represented by 'a cloke of covetousness' is difficult. The word prophasis ('cloke') can have a variety of meanings; pleonexia is also an elusive word; and the sense of the genitive is patient of a number of different explanations. Perhaps the most likely explanation of Paul's meaning is that he is denying that he has been guilty of any sort of hidden exploitation of the Thessalonians. There are many ways in which one can exploit someone, that is, use him for one's own selfish ends, for self-gratification of one kind or another. Often, of course, a man's exploitation of his fellow-man is open, shameless, blatant. But exploitation of others is sometimes exceedingly subtle; and, among Christians, it can be veiled in a beautifully pious disguise. And not only can it be hidden from its victim and from all human witnesses: it can also be unrecognized by the exploiter himself - unconscious exploitation of others.

We notice next Paul's reference to his gentleness /18 in v7: 'But we were gentle in the midst of you as when a nurse /19 cherisheth her own children'. It is an inter-

ing and instructive feature of this paragraph; for gentleness is an apostolic quality which is by no means common among parish ministers and priests. How many of the clergy would be more accurately described as inclined to be arrogant, self-willed, stubborn, domineering, than as gentle! How many are too conscious of their authority, and apt to see it as a personal thing rather than as belonging to the message, of which they are always the altogether unworthy; and are meant to be the humble servants! The gentleness to which Paul refers is surely contrary to all pomposity and also to that excessive loquaciousness, which is a besetting sin of many clergy, making them far too often oblivious of the fact that their parishioners need not only to be talked to by, but also to be able to confide in, their pastors (and some parishioners are likely to be too shy and hesitant to be able readily to seize the odd moments when their pastors stop for breath).

From the rest of vv1-12 we pick out just three things for notice. The first is the reference in v8 to Paul's and his colleagues' readiness to impart to the Thessalonians not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because we were become very dear to us', which both gives us a precious glimpse of the tender affection of Paul's relations with his churches and is also a reminder that to be a proper Christian pastor one must give one's very self (cf. SV;NEB) to those in one's charge, so that, while belonging absolutely to Christ alone, one belongs more to them than to oneself. The second is v10: 'Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably we have behaved ourselves toward you that believe'. It should be remembered that Paul is not speaking here of what he has been, or is, in God's sight (in view of Romans 7:14ff, it may, we think, be safely assumed that the man who wrote these words was well aware that his life had fallen, and still continued to fall, far short of God's absolute standard). He is not claiming that his conduct toward the Thessalonians has been blameless in God's sight; but only that it has been such that before his fellow-Christians he can hold his head erect. A Christian minister, who knows himself altogether unworthy before God, may still be conscious of being a man of relative integrity and of having a right to look his fellow-Christians in the eyes. And, if he is not a man of integrity in this sense, he is scarcely likely to be a true minister of the gospel. The third is the presence

the words 'each one of you' in v11. Paul's giving himself to these churches involved a fatherly concern for each individual in them - one by one. Such a caring for the individual is a mark of every faithful under-shepherd of Him who - we are told - 'calleteth his own sheep by name' (John 10:3)

## V

We turn lastly to vv17-20, in which Paul speaks of his strong desire to see the Thessalonian Christians again and the fact that he (note the emphatic 'I Paul' in v18) has more than once wanted to visit them again (though he has not been able to do so), and then goes on to say: 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy'. This is surely something decidedly surprising for the apostle to say. John Calvin saw the difficulty: Paul's words seem to be inconsonant with the truth that there is only One, in whom we may properly boast either now or hereafter, God Himself. His comment is sensible: 'we should not take this to mean that he glories in any other than God, but that we are allowed to glory in all of God's favours in their proper place in such a way that He Himself is always the point of aim'. /20 These last two verses of the chapter shed a flood of light on the important question of the scale of values to be recognized by the minister of the gospel, be he a parish minister or a theological teacher. That to glory in our social, academic or ecclesiastical honours or dignities is out of the question should be clear to us. Karl Barth wisely recognized that in heaven his eleven honorary doctorates would all have to be handed in at the cloakroom, /21 and even the Church Dogmatics would be but waste paper there, /22 where we shall know even as also we have been known. But, if at the parousia of Jesus Christ 'notice the words 'before our Lord Jesus at his coming' (the present tense (este) in v20 is to be understood in the light of v19): to glory in our converts now or in the large numbers who, maybe, crowd the churches where we minister would be premature, since we do not yet know who will endure to the end - there are some who have owed something of their true faith in Jesus Christ to words or deeds of ours, then that is something of eternal worth, in which, as God's favour to us, we may properly glory and rejoice, humbly and thank-



tes

I quote the RV, because it still seems to me the best translation for the student who cannot read Greek to use as the basis of his study.

7. The first 'also' of the verse (representing the second 'ai') is by some connected with 'we', by others with 'thank'. In either case, the force of the Greek word is just to give emphasis to the word it is associated with. It is probably better (pace B. Rigaux, Saint Paul: les Épîtres aux Thessaloniens, Paris and Gembloux, 1956, p.437f) to connect it with the verb.

8. The dia touto ('for this cause') is here used with reference to what follows, anticipating 'that.....'

9. op.cit., p.440

10. To understand the first accusative from the participial clause (in Greek: in the RV the clause beginning with 'when') is of course natural enough.

11. So too J.A. Bengel (in his Gnomon Novi Testamenti, first published in 1742), who saw in the introduction here of a relative clause about God an underlining of the fact that the word really is God's word.

12. Cf. the use of energeōs (RV: 'active') with reference to the word of God in Hebrews 4:12. If we were to accept Rigaux's contention (op.cit. pp.440, 668-70) that energeitai is passive ('is rendered active': RV 'worketh' assumes that it is middle), then the question of the antecedent would be settled in favour of the word; but we are not convinced by his arguments.

13. Readings in St. John's Gospel, London, 1950, p.271f.

14. The RV takes ekdiōkein here to mean 'drive out'. It is rather more probable that the ek- has here a strengthening force and that the compound verb is used in the sense 'persecute vehemently'. Cf. A. Depeke, in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (Eds), Theologisches Wörterbuch zum NT, 2, p.232f.

15. In one case the participle is not expressed but has to be supplied - that is ontōn with enantiōn.

16. The purpose is understood to be God's.

17. Cf. also Matthew 23:32

For an attempt to expound what Paul meant by the 'wrath of God' and its revelation we take the liberty of referring the reader to C.E.B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 1, Edinburgh, 1977<sup>2</sup>, 106-111, 213-217.

op.cit.pp400 and 388f.

See W.Bauer, Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des NT und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur, Berlin, 1971 (corrected and expanded reprint of 5th ed.of 1958), s.v.1

Cf., e.g., Euripides, Hippolytus 421-423; Ion 670-672; Demosthenes 9:3; Aristotle, Athenaion Politeia 16:6; Polybius 2:38.

See, for example, John 7:26; 7:54; Acts 4:29; Ephesians 2:12; Hebrews 10:19; 1 John 3:21.

On the textual variation between ἑπιοι ('gentle') and ββιοι ('babes') the reader may be referred to B.M.Metzger, The Text of the NT: its transmission, corruption and restoration, Oxford, 1968<sup>2</sup>, pp230-233, ἑπιοι should surely be read.

The Jerusalem Bible is surely right in rendering μητρὸς here by 'a mother': cf. Sophocles, Ajax 849; Theophrastus 27:65.

The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians, Eng.tr.by R.Mackenzie, Edinburgh, 1961, 51.

E.Busch, Karl Barth: his life from letters and autobiographical texts, Eng.tr.by J.Bowden, London, 1976, p489.

2. *ibid.*

IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF IT -  
NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES ON WORLD, CHURCH  
AND MISSION. M.H. Cressey

This paper began with a contribution to theological conversations sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (1973-77): the preparation and revising of it were also among the stimuli which led to the lectures on 'Covenant and Hope' recently given by the writer at the Union Theological College, Belfast. The purpose of the paper is to provide a broad view of the relations between church and world. It is presented in the hope that Christians today can achieve a considerable degree of agreement on this theme which will enable them to come closer to one another in discerning the right way of fulfilling their discipleship in today's situation of mission. Dr. Thaut, then Director of the Hamburg Baptist Seminary, made the point, in one of the Baptist/Reformed meetings, that this situation itself provides a new context for agreement, for whereas our ancestors saw their situation from quite different standpoints, the Reformed emphasising the planting of the church which had already taken place and the Baptists the continuing call to mission, there is today a general recognition that large numbers of our fellow-citizens in every country of the world are either alienated from Christian faith or have never been adequately confronted with its challenge.

While the paper will concentrate on relating some New Testament material to this new situation, often described by the phrase 'mission in six continents', it may be useful by way of introduction to refer back to the earlier differences. Even in the time of the Reformation there were those who saw clearly the missionary imperative; Erasmus urged the duty of evangelising the whole world and Adrianus Saravia, a Reformed pastor at Antwerp and Brussels, a



professor at Leyden, and later Dean of Westminster ( ), published in 1590 a treatise on the ministry of the gospel which commends the carrying on of the missionary work of the apostles. Yet, on the one hand, this vision was directed outside Europe and, on the other hand, it was repudiated by other Reformed leaders both because they denied the need for any special agency for the conversion of the heathen and on the ground that the missionary command ceased with the apostles (cf. 'History of Christian Missions', C.H. Robinson, Edinburgh, 1915, p.43). When William Carey as a Baptist pastor issued in 1792 'An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use means for the conversion of the Heathens', he knew that he had to argue first for the obligation ('whether the commission given by our Lord to his Disciples be not still binding on us'), secondly for the use of means as against those who held that the conversion of the heathen was the work of God alone without the industry of men, and thirdly (the point most relevant for our present purpose) for a recognition (1892 Facsimile Reprint, p.66) that 'the face of most Christian countries presents a dreadful scene of ignorance, hypocrisy, and profligacy. Various baneful, and pernicious errors appear to gain ground, in almost every part of Christendom: the truths of the gospel, and even the gospel itself, are attacked, and every method that the enemy can invent is employed to undermine the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. All these things are loud calls to Christians, and especially to ministers, to exert themselves to the utmost in their several spheres of action, and to try to enlarge them as much as possible. Just as we noted the voices of Reformed preachers like Saravia raised in the call to mission, so we must remind ourselves that there were Baptists who opposed Carey's plans. Carey does, however, stand as an example of concern for mission both at home and abroad in face of an indifference sometimes rationalised into a hyper-Calvinist theology.

Today Reformed and Baptist alike, with very few exceptions, would accept the arguments of Carey's 'Enquiry.' They see the work of God in Christ for our salvation as creating a responsibility for the proclamation and communication of the gospel, a responsibility which must be discharged in Europe and North America just as much as in Africa, Asia and Latin America or the isles of the Pacific Ocean. This view is shared also by the Second Vatican Council when it declares ('Ad Gentes', para. 6): 'In this missionary activity of the Church various stages are sometimes found side by side: first, that of the beginning or planting, then that of newness or youth. When these stages have passed, the Church's missionary activity does not cease. Rather, there lies upon the particular Churches which are already set up the duty of continuing this activity and of preaching the gospel to those still outside.... Thus, missionary activity among the nations differs from pastoral activity exercised among the faithful, as well as from undertakings aimed at restoring unity among Christians. And yet these other two activities are most closely connected with the missionary zeal of the church....'

If this is where Christians all stand today, we are ready for reexamination of the New Testament material on church and world which in the past has been seen through the 'spectacles' of our varied understandings of the situation of our churches. We shall take two examples of the New Testament material, the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel and the fifth chapter of 1 Corinthians. In the first, we shall consider the world as distinct from the community of faith and in the second the world as it invades that community.

### The 'Kosmos' in the Fourth Gospel

The phrases of our title, 'in the world' and 'not of the the world', are derived from the

prayer of Jesus in John 17. 'I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee' (v.11): 'the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world' (v.14). Other verses important for the understanding of the meaning here are verse 9, "I am praying for them" (the disciples): "I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me", and verses 20 and 21, 'I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.'

If we are to use the phrases of our title in speaking of church and world today, we will be wise to start from these original uses, since otherwise we may confuse ourselves and others.

There is a general recognition (cf. Kittel TWNT, Arndt/Gingrich) that the specifically Johannine usage of the word 'kosmos' ('world') emphasises not simply the neutral or even the noble fact that the universe and the world of humankind exhibit order, but rather the tragic corruption by which this very order, so dear to the Greek philosophers, is now ranged against the purposes of God and the Christ whom He has sent. 'The whole world is in the power of the evil one' (1 Jn.5.19); so 'do not love the world or the things in the world' (1 Jn.2.13). On the other hand the 'kosmos' is the object of God's redeeming love (Jn.3.16). In Jn.17 these two aspects of the 'kosmos' as opposed to God, yet the object of His love, are in subtle interplay.

From the many commentators we select two (neither Baptist nor Reformed!) to show the problem more clearly. Loisy, the Roman Catholic modernist (*Le Quatrième Évangile*, Picard, Paris, 1903) sees a double usage. 'If, on the one hand, the world is the realm of Satan, it is, on the other hand, the theatre where the divine purposes



work themselves out, where the work of salvation must continue through the preaching of the gospel.. This world which must believe and know that the Christ was sent by God is not the world for which Jesus was just now declining to pray. In so far as the world is delivered over to Satan, is constituted by unbelieving and reprobate humanity, Jesus does not pray for the world. In so far as the world is the setting in which the children of God come together, Jesus prays that the world may acknowledge God and His Christ' (pp.807 and 812, my translation). This is to understand the later reference to the world in verse 21, and the gospel of Jn.3.16, in the light of verses 9 and 14; it is not the world itself that is loved or that comes to believe but only the elect within it, now hidden from view but soon to become manifest as the preaching of the disciples begins to bear fruit. We may call this type of exegesis 'world-denying' rather than 'world-affirming', though we shall need to return to this other and modern contrast later.

Rudolf Bultmann ('The Gospel of John, Eng. Tr., Blackwell, Oxford, 1971, p.508') sees verse 15 as the exegetical key - 'I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one'. "These words", he says, "are directed against two things. First, against the primitive Christian expectation of the imminence of the end, and the longing for the glorious Parousia, which will make the community an 'ecclesia triumphans'; no, the church's essential nature involves being the eschatological community in which the world is annulled within the world.. Secondly, the words are directed against the temptation that continually threatens the community, viz. of falling back into the world's hands: the community must not allow itself to be misled through the world's hatred into being disloyal to its essential nature; it must not allow itself to become engrossed in its place in world-history, or regard itself as a factor of cultural importance,

find itself in a synthesis with the world and  
 "make peace with the world". Bultmann can then  
 continue at verse 21 (p.514). -"If there is such  
 an eschatological community in the cosmos, in  
 history, then there is always a possibility of  
 faith for the world. The community is of course  
 always a cause of irritation for the world, and  
 can always inflame its anger (v.14). But this  
 means that the possibility of deciding for the  
 revealer is also always given to it, and this  
 was and always will be the means of overcoming  
 the offence.... And that is why the prayer for  
 the community is at the same time an intercession  
 for the world, in which (as verse 18 has already  
 said) the community has been set its task."  
 Here is 'world-affirming' faith which shows up in  
 exegesis. The world is not simply the 'massa  
 perditionis' from which the elect are to be called  
 out but rather the permanent possibility of  
 salvation.

It is not that Loisy and Bultmann (and other  
 exegetes who resemble one or other of them) are  
 mere in direct contradiction: rather they are  
 examining the material each in a different order.  
 Yet the consequences of following one order  
 rather than the other can be very considerable  
 when exegesis leads to action. To see the world  
 negatively, as that from which, out of which the  
 elect are to be called, can lead to a 'world-  
 denying' style of living much more extensive in  
 its effects than the particular exegesis - or  
 Calvinist theology itself! The structures and  
 even the beauty of the 'kosmos' are then treated  
 only as temptations, as the sparkle on the sur-  
 face of deep waters in which we shall easily be  
 drowned. To see the world positively, as that  
 place where the possibility of decision for God  
 is ever present, enables a 'world-affirming'  
 style of living, again not logically entailed by  
 the exegesis, but somehow stimulated by it. Then  
 the structures and beauty of the 'kosmos' are  
 seen as the fitting background for the decision.

red indeed and 'denatured' if the decision goes otherwise, but ready for, longing for redemption along with the manifestation of the sons of God (cf. Romans 8). We may further compare the two exegeses in terms of two of the parables of the kingdom: is the Church's work more like fishing, getting the fish out of the water, or more like farming, growing the plants in the soil (cf. Matt.13., 24-30 and 47-49)? Perhaps the fact that these two parables are placed so near one another in Matthew may suggest that we need both 'world-denying' and 'world-affirming' elements in a balanced Christian appraisal of the world. This would confirm Bultmann's use of verse 15 in Jn.17 as the key. When we become too other-worldly like the Thessalonians, we are to be recalled to the field of the world; when we become too earth-bound, we are to be reminded that our hope is fixed on God and not on the 'kosmos', whose structures and beauty, whose 'form' 'passes away'. (1 Cor. 7. 31).

What seems evident to me, at least, is that as we consider the 'in the world/not of the world' tension, our positions are not predictable simply by whether we are Reformed or Baptist (or whatever), but that on these questions a debate is equally proceeding in each of our world families of churches.

### Holiness and Worldliness

The second passage we shall examine raises a different issue, the invasion or infiltration of the church by worldly values and behaviour. 'I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral men; not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But rather I wrote to you not to associate with any one who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber - not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those



inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. Drive out the wicked person from among you.' (1 Cor.5.9-13)

In this respect also the Baptist-Reformed theological Conversations found evidence of a first division of judgment and practice; in the summary of one of the meetings it was said. The reformed tradition emphasises the aspect of 'Heilsgemeinde' and the thought of the church as 'corpus permixtum'. It understands mission as an activity pervading all realms of life and society by the gospel. The Baptist tradition emphasises the aspect of mission.. and the thought of the church as 'gathered believers' committed to the task of proclaiming the gospel to each individual". Although we also agreed "that these emphases are not mutually exclusive", they seem to be directly connected with the question of the church as a holy community in relation to justification, a question seen as a sensitive area for discussion in our programme of 1974.

The problem may be put like this. Neither tradition has adopted an antinomian stance which would ignore or fail to deal with the kind of open immorality of which Paul had heard in the Corinthian church; but so far as it is possible to generalise in the summarising of our findings (and that may not be very far!), there does seem to be a tendency for Baptists to apply Paul's teaching about withholding fellowship in relation to matters which Reformed churches have seen as regrettable evidence indeed of 'tares among the wheat' but not as so evil as to require separation from their perpetrators. If this is so, what are the reasons for it?

One answer might be that it is precisely our different baptismal practices that lead to these different responses to Paul's counsel. Pre-do-baptists, it might be said, have to cope with the presence in the membership of the church of those who, declared to be members by the sign of baptism, have never come to personal faith, which

it appropriates justification is able to experience sanctifying grace: those who baptise only believers have a more immediate expectation that sanctifying grace will be evidently at work in them and apply correspondingly more severe discipline to 'drive out the wicked person'. While there is clearly some force in this line of argument, it is weakened by the reflection that some paedobaptist churches, e.g. the Church of Scotland at certain periods, have exercised a very strict discipline and have had the very highest expectations concerning the working out of the implications of baptism within the families of those within the covenant of grace, whereas elsewhere believers' baptist communities have become lax in discipline even to the point of what vonhoeffler called 'cheap grace', so that other baptists felt obliged to withhold fellowship from them.

We must therefore examine another possibility, that the difference in discipline arises from a difference of response to the situation of Christendom and post-Christendom. This would fit with the observation that Baptist/Reformed tension has been most evident in 'Christendom' situations in different parts of the world, ranging from the 'volkskirche' of Germany to the Christian communalism of some parts of India. In such cases there is an inter-play of the 'world-denying' and 'world-affirming' styles of Christian living with the confused position of the 'Christian ruler', 'Christian country', 'Christian community'. While it may be readily possible to achieve some balance or consensus in views of the world as distinct from the church, agreement is much less easy in face of the ruler, state or communal body which claims the name of Christian, upholds some Christian values, sustains some Christian instruction, and yet also functions in many ways like the rulers, states or communities of 'this world'.

It was in Christendom that the differentiated Reformed and Baptist traditions arose. The

formed were neither ignorant of nor insensitive to the problems of an undisciplined church; they saw the New Testament line running from the appropriation of justification to the working out of salvation under the guidance of the 'third use' of the law. The Anabaptists and later the Baptists pressed more eagerly for the purging out of corruption, believing that talk of 'tares and wheat' growing together till the judgment was a right description of the field which is the world and not of the church. Thus Reformed and Baptist thought and often did agree on the advantages of living under beneficent rule and just laws; they took different paths in pastoral activity exercised among the faithful.

### Half-Believers

But who are 'the faithful'? Is it enough to describe the difference between Reformed and Baptist practice as that between a lenient and a strict application of the third use of the law? Baptists could accept Calvin's description of the third use: it 'has respect to believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already flourishes and reigns. For although the Law is written and engraven on their hearts by the finger of God, that is, though they are so influenced and actuated by the Spirit, that they desire to obey God, there are two ways in which they still profit in the Law. For it is the best instrument for enabling them daily to learn with greater truth and certainty what the will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow, and to confirm them in this knowledge...Then, because we need not doctrine merely, but exhortation also, the servant of God will derive this further advantage from the Law: by frequently meditating upon it, he will be excited to obedience, and confirmed in it, and so drawn away from the slippery paths of sin' (Inst.II.vii.12). And though both Reformed and Baptist can fall into legalism, both surely agree that this third use of the law is not what justifies us, any more than the first or second uses of the law.



But the problem lies in that word 'believers' at the beginning of the quotation from Calvin. Even if that word be extended to the believing family and the incipient faith of 'Christian children' (in terms of Donald Baillie's use of that last phrase; 'Theology of the Sacraments', Faber, p.82), are there not to be found in the churches of Christendom whether in the sixteenth century or today many names on church rolls of those who are not, perhaps never have been, believers in any meaningful sense?

Here an interview cited in the preparatory material for the Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches may be helpful. Manoel de Mello, founder of 'Brazil for Christ Movement' is being questioned about evangelism. "More than 99% of the Brazilians are already converted. It is almost impossible to meet a Brazilian who does not believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour, in God, in the Holy Spirit.... Someone comes to my church and says: Missionary, I brought this couple to the service; they are not 'believers'. But they are believers, as you will see. 'Do you believe in Jesus Christ?' 'I believe'. As far as believing is concerned, they believe, except that they do not practise the same faith. In fact we, the evangelicals, have perhaps turned away more people from the Kingdom of God than we have won, because of certain expressions which we have invented, such as 'So-and-so is not converted, So-and-so is not saved. So-and-so is not a believer.' And that spirit astonishes and alienates people". (Section 1 Dossier for Nairobi, p.39).

Manoel de Mello here challenges us all to face the evangelistic/pastoral task of such a 'Christendom' situation as still exists in many places. We have operated in the past with a sharp distinction between that kind of belief which 'even the demons' share 'and shudder' (Jas.2.19) and the 'faith working through love' of which Paul speaks (Gal.5.6). It is the latter faith that the Reformed have looked for in parents who

present their infant children for baptism and that Baptists have sought in the candidates for baptism as believers. But the couple whom de Mello presents to us, while clearly not committed in faith in that sense, are so far related to Jesus Christ through their traditional knowledge of him and the thought-pattern of their society that to repulse them as 'unbelievers' becomes evangelistically and pastorally dubious. Even if we assure that being born again in faith is an event that can be dated (at least by God if not by us), it is a different matter evangelistically and pastorally to bring such believers as de Mello's couple, who may well have been baptised as infants, to a point of full commitment in faith, than it is to do the same for one who himself acknowledges that he starts as an unbeliever or an adherent of some other religion. Here, as in the matter of generally 'world-denying' or 'world-affirming' views, it seems to me that we are involved in a common quest rather than in a sharply defined clash of church traditions. For, on the one hand, in all our traditions there is a variety of responses to the confused beliefs of our fellow-citizens, and, on the other hand, as I wish now to argue, there is no direct road to an answer to these problems from our baptismal doctrines and practices.

To summarise my position so far, it is that Reformed and Baptist (and many others) are now at a point in their history where they are already separately considering certain problems - attitude to the world, exercise of discipline, approach to half-believers, - that on these problems there is diversity of conclusions in each of our traditions, and that we had better keep working on them, exegetically, systematically and pragmatically, in a joint enterprise.

But what now becomes of the stated intention of the Baptist/Reformed Theological Conversation formulated at the first meeting, 'to treat our particular convictions about baptism in a way

which illuminates their relation to, and consequential nature within, a total understanding of theology and of the church's task today'? I want to suggest that, whatever has been the integrated nature of our past theologies, the placing of our baptismal doctrines and practices is now much more problematic in relation to the contemporary situation and understanding.

### Baptism and Mission

The problems summarised above as concerning attitude to the world, exercise of discipline and approach to half-believers, all involve an appraisal of mission. Since it is God who sends the church on its mission, the last sentence could be rephrased to speak of an appraisal of what God is doing in the world to-day. Let us look briefly at some possible forms of such appraisal and their consequences for baptismal practice.

Our attitude to 'the world', used here in a more neutral sense than in the Fourth Gospel, may be on the one hand that it is drifting or in places rushing into a chaotic end or organising itself for a final defiance of God's purposes, or on the other hand that despite all its follies, tragedies and sins it bears the marks, particularly where Christian influence has been felt, of the working out of the divine purposes. But the adoption of one or other of these views does not settle the question of how best to rescue men and women from 'the world' or of how best to establish them as unambiguous witnesses for the divine purposes elsewhere ambiguously present. Paedobaptists can argue either that the familial character of their rite separates off the family of faith or that it prefigures the family of mankind; believers' baptists can argue that the voluntary act of the believer is the mark either of his stepping out of the world or of his testimony to that world concerning its own hidden destiny.

Secondly, exercises of discipline can, as we pointed out earlier (p.9) be strict or lenient



Thirdly, in approach to half-believers, paedobaptists can argue that their practice creates a basis for growth of the family unit towards mature faith, while they can also be criticised for letting half-believers and their children remain half-pagans; believers' baptists can argue that their practice sets before the half-believers a clear challenge to full commitment, while they can be criticised as repulsing incipient faith by appearing to deny to it any reality, 'astonishing and alienating' people.

I conclude that the question of baptismal practice cannot any longer be settled, even if it could have been in the past, as part of a general view of the church's task, but must be resolved, after all, by a direct dealing with baptismal doctrine, in particular the relation of baptism to faith in the order of events in time. This topic is the subject of many contemporary Faith and Order discussions.

### A Possible New Perspective

It would be unhelpful to close on the note of 'passing the buck' to those preparing other reports! There is, I believe, a possible new perspective within which we might pursue the joint study advocated above. This is the perspective offered by the discussion of the church as 'sacrament, sign and instrument', brought out, for instance, in part of the report of the Faith and Order Consultation at Salamanca in September 1973, in which Reformed and Baptist participants played an active role along with colleagues from other churches.

The report says (cf. The Ecumenical Review, April 1974) - "the terms 'sacrament' and 'sign' refer to the mystery of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.. But in the course of history, the terms have also been used for the community of those who believe in Him. Because this community is an integral part of the mystery of God's action in bringing about His Kingdom, it is, in a

derivative sense, 'sacrament' and 'sign' in history, reflecting God's purpose and promise to all people. As the Church communicates the Gospel, it is 'sign' in the sense of instrument. It contributes to the salvation and communion of people with God in Jesus Christ".

"When the Church is called 'sacrament' and 'sign'," the report continues, "there cannot be any thought of identifying the Church and the Kingdom of God as if the Church had already arrived at its goal and thus embodied the fulness of God's gift in its historical existence. It is no more than a sign indicating the reality of God's purpose for the world. It might even be said that the sign is often hidden because Christians are disobedient to their call and divided in their response. The Church must confess that it shares in and contributes to the brokenness of the world. The Church is a sign which constantly needs to be made visible. Therefore, the Church must constantly look at the ways in which its sign character has been obscured and needs to be restored."

If we add that as instrument the Church must not be confounded with that world in which it is to be instrumental, we may find in the language of these Salamanca paragraphs a hint for the formulation of a programme which requires equal emphasis on 'not of the world' (that the 'sacrament' 'sign', instrument may be effective) and on 'in the world' (that the 'sacrament', 'sign', instrument may in all its effectiveness actually communicate, illuminate and bring change).

At least it was appropriate to explore such thoughts as we sat at the Baptist Seminary in Ruschlikon in peace and looked across the lake to the busy life of Zurich. This paper may serve to illustrate what I believe to be the essential interrelations of New Testament study, systematic theology, inter-church dialogue and involvement in the world which God loves.

J.M.BARKLEY, Ed:

Handbook to the Church HymnaryThird Edition, 411pp    Oxford Univ. Press  
£3.50

The publication of the Handbook(3) to the Church Hymnary has been awaited with much interest and its publication has not proved to be a disappointment. Indeed it shows every evidence of being a worthy successor to Dr John Brownlee's handbook to the first edition which he published in 1899 and the handbook to the Revised Church Hymnary published by Professor James Moffatt and Dr Millar Patrick in 1927.

The editorship of the Handbook to the third edition was in the able and skilled hands of Principal John Barkley and the book was divided up into sections which were edited by a variety of writers, all of whom were members of the Revision committee. The first part of the Handbook is an Introduction which is a reprint of the introduction to be found in the Church Hymnary, third edition.

One should note the references to basic changes made in the structure of the third edition. The Revision Committee, bearing in mind that the order of Holy Communion is normative for worship in the Reformed Church based the contents on (a) the 'Liturgy of the Word'; (b) the 'Liturgy of the Faithful'. The choice of this order will help the use of correct liturgical patterns in worship.

Another interesting innovation is the introduction of a number of metrical psalms into the contents of the hymnary, ensuring a wider variety of use of the Psalter. Hymns for children were also dealt with in a new manner in that they are now embodied in the general structure of the hymnary, emphasizing the participation of the children in the worship of the sanctuary.

After the Introduction, the first section of the Handbook deals with Christian Hymnody- this section was edited by Dr Thomas H. Keir, the Convener of the Revision committee. He begins by asking, 'What is a hymn?' and quotes St. Ambrose's definition 'A song of praise to God' as being a useful definition. He next deals with hymnody in the NT, suggesting that the Prologue to St John was probably a hymn and that it has been incorporated in Hymn 162 by Neil Alexander, a member of the Revision committee. Hymn 399 by A.M. Hunter



is based on Philippians 2:6-11 which was probably originally used as a hymn.

Dr Keir deals with the spread of the Christian Church, its division into east and west and the hymns which arose in each area. The influence of Byzantium is to be found in hymns 192, 267, and 269, translated by John Mason Neale. The influence of Spain is represented in hymns 198, 199 and the influence of the Celtic church in Hymns 301, 397 and 398. Being a member of a church which is an heir of the Celtic church, one would have expected Dr Keir to give more time to the Celtic hymnody.

Dr Keir deals in a clear way with the varying circumstances which led to the writing of hymns such as countering heresy, response to historical and personal stress and the use of antiphons and tropes. He next gives a detailed account of the development of Christian music and here he becomes exceedingly technical and unlikely to appeal to the average reader. He does, however, make a useful reference to the fact that the popularity of the carol and the growth of vernacular literature and vernacular music all contributed to the demand for a popular hymnody. When he comes to the Reformation, Dr Keir pays tribute to Martin Luther as a first-class musician and emphasizes the objectivity of his hymns. One cannot help, however, feeling that he has not given enough place to the work of Luther in hymnody and has perhaps allowed his preoccupation with the Mediaeval period to obscure the dramatic change in hymnody which was brought about by the Reformation.

Dr Keir stresses the subjective nature of eighteenth century hymnody and while there is general agreement on this, it must be remembered that personal devotion, with its overtones of subjectivity, must be a part of all Christian worship. Criticism has been made that the Third Edition omitted too many well-known hymns of personal devotion. Dr Keir feels that the reason for so much subjectivism is that the Evangelical movement has not come to terms with the concept of the church and that it required the Tractarian movement to recover the doctrine of the church and embody it in hymnody. In this matter his assessment would appear correct and on the whole, within the space allotted, Dr Keir has given a good account of the history of hymnody.

The next section deals with Psalmody and was written by Dr Stuart Loudon, Vice-Convener of the Revision Committee. After giving an historical account of the Psalter in

OT and NT times, he shows how it was used as a pattern for such Christian hymns as began to emerge in Apostolic times. The Biblical revival of the Reformation led to a re-discovery of the Psalms and the Metrical Psalms became a part of worship especially in the Calvinist traditions. He traces the history of psalmody in Scotland and pays tribute to the work of the Irish Psalter of 1880 and shows how the opening verses of Psalm 62, vv 5-8, Psalm 85, second version, embodied as number 25 and 75 in the third edition are much more satisfactory. He notes that the third edition of the Church Hymnary has 57 Psalms and rightly notes that this has led to a wider use of the Psalter. Dr Loudon also refers to the three excellent translations of Psalms from the New English Bible and one regrets that Professor Pitt-Watson did not give us more of his rich talent for translation.

The Rev Stewart Todd writes a section of the Canticles, reminding us that they preserve the audible voice of the early church. The author deals sympathetically and imaginatively with a mode of Praise which has, as yet, found little place in Presbyterian worship. He gives us a useful reminder that "hymns are not religio-musical interlude to relieve the tedium of speaking but they are the people's part in the liturgy" and he feels that the increasing use of Canticles may help to promote that part.

Principal Barkley next deals with the work of revision, 1963-1973. He asks certain basic questions: "What is a Hymn-book?", "Who are the Church?", "Of what does the Church's praise consist?". In each section he provides extensive illustrations from the third edition and on the question, "Who are the Church?" he reminds us that an initial approach to other churches for an ecumenical hymnary failed. He also makes reference to a number of hymns which have been contributed by the younger churches. Principal Barkley deals with the principles of working of the Revision committee and shows that the various churches were consulted at all stages.

It is worth reminding ourselves that revision was democratically conducted and every opportunity given for expressions of opinion. At least 23 hymns from the Revised Church Hymnary were thus restored. It is chastening to find that while a great number of new hymns were submitted to the committee, only 8 were counted worthy of inclusion and 6 of these were composed by members of the committee.

It is apparently not a hymn-writing age.

Next Principal Barkley deals with the principles on which the music was selected and reminds us that thirty new tunes were commissioned. He takes pride in the fact that 'political decision' had only to be taken on two issues-the use of the term 'Confirmation' and the inclusion of some tunes commonly used in Wales. He states that there was complete unanimity on the committee's proposals and indeed harmony persisted throughout the revision, owing much to the tact and wisdom of the Hon. Secretary, the late Neville Davidson Kelly. In his conclusion, Principal Barkley summarizes the contents of the book and his well-known 'computer-mind' is evident in the skilful analysis of the facts presented to us.

The last submitted section deals with the Music and this is in the able hands of Professor Pitt-Watson. He reminds us of the new procedure where, instead of a Musical Director, a Musical Sub-Committee and Musical consultants were appointed. He states that weak music must be rejected but that sometimes music and words have become so entwined that it is impossible to separate them. In this case the only way is to offer an alternative tune as has been done so successfully in Hymn 418, "Jesus loves me". He declares that in selecting tunes, singability must be a prime consideration and good tunes can be used more than once to release new words. He supports the absence of 'popular' religious music on the grounds that it changes so rapidly and much of it is not hymnology.

One can well remember the protracted debate over 'Lord of the Dance' and the narrow majority by which it was rejected. Time will show if we were right. Many tunes have been set at a lower pitch, thus encouraging unison singing. This may not be popular in certain quarters but it will certainly help congregational singing. Professor Pitt-Watson has written a very readable article which will be intelligible to both the musical and non-musical users of the book.

The greater part of the book is taken up with notes on the hymns and biographical notes on the authors and composers. In this section Principal Barkley has carried out a mammoth task of research, giving us a mass of factual information on the hymns and their composers which will prove invaluable to those who wish to use the Church Hymn-



try with understanding and profit. The Handbook concludes with three appendices setting out new hymns, new music and the names of the Revision committee.

The Handbook is reasonably priced, easily readable and should prove a useful addition to the libraries of ministers, organists and their members.

The First Presbyterian Church,  
Barnagh

G. Temple Lundie

Ralph P. Martin: New Testament Foundations Vols 1 & 2  
 Paternoster Press 1975, 1978 pp325, 463  
 Vol 1: no price Vol 2 £9

NT Foundations is intended to be a guide for Christian students through the NT. Vol I deals with the four gospels and Vol 2 with Acts to Revelation. It is not meant to take the place of standard introductions but has the more limited objective of "pinpointing and applying what appear to be the salient issues in the modern discussion" (p10). On the whole this limited objective is fulfilled in an admirable way.

In the opening chapter of volume 1, entitled "Introducing the Gospels", he shows how strange the description 'gospel' would be in a Graeco-Roman world, examines the meaning of the term especially as applied in Mark and declares that the writers of the gospels are not interested in Jesus merely as a historical figure but one who is "emphatically... the center and substance of the preaching ministry, teaching responsibility, and living power of Christians in the church and in the world". (p26)

In chapter 2 we are introduced to the generally accepted positions in synoptic study, form-criticism, redaction and the interpretation of the gospel in the light of recent study. We are shown how the theory of Mark as the prior Gospel was used to "erect bulwarks of historical facts in the gospels against the inroads of the mythical school", the emergence of the awareness that the gospels were not biographies but had an exclusively religious purpose and interest (pp33, 36) and the effects of radical form-criticism on the historical approach to the gospels. (pp 37-42)

He goes on to inquire as to the type of history that the gospels are concerned to record and speaks of 'interpreted' or 'kerygmatic' history (p44), where each single story of saying may contain the gospel in miniature and disclose something of God's activity. He deals finally in Part I with the practical issue of how Jesus is known today (p49). Many ministers and students will find this a helpful section in relation to modern scepticism about the historical Jesus.

In Part II which deals with the background, of particular note is that dealing with the possibility of Jesus being a zealot espoused by Reimarus, Eisler and more recently by S.F.G. Brandon and where we have a well-conducted and attractive discussion. The elements in the gospel records that have given rise to this view still remain difficult to explain but on the whole most of the material can hardly be adjusted to such a view without mutilating our present gospels as Brandon does. In Part III we are brought up to date on the discussion on the inter-relation of the gospels with questions raised about the priority of Matthew and the resurgence of the Griesbach theory. On the whole Dr Martin treats W.R. Farmer's theory in too summary a fashion. The debate on the subject has advanced beyond the stage represented in this book. The short summary of NT Textual Criticism today with its emphasis on eclecticism is worth reading, reminding us of the re-appraisal of the Byzantine text, the Caesarean and the so-called 'Western' text-types.

The treatment of the four gospels in Part IV is of especial value with its attempt to take in all the modern discussion on each of the gospels. We may take one gospel, Matthew, for the purposes of illustration. The threefold question is raised as to whether Matthew is a product of the community or of an 'editorial theologian' or of eye-witnesses. Those who support it as being with work of the community include Stendahl with his 'School of Matthew' or Kilpatrick in his 'Origins of St. Matthew's Gospel', grounded in the church's liturgical needs or G. Schille who sees the gospel as a church catechism. Among those-and there are quite a number-who lay stress on the editorial theologian aspect we have Gunther Bornkamm and H.J. Held with G. Barth in 'Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew's Gospel' (ET London, 1963). Then we have R.H. Gundry's 'The use of the OT in St. Matthew's Gospel' (Leiden, 1967) where he endeavours to bring the Gospel back to an apostolic (eyewitness) source,

existing that the language phenomenon illustrated in the citations could only be found in one area, Palestine.

Martin lists for us three areas where he sees that no certain decision is possible i.e. the role of Matthew in the interpretation of the traditions he has received, or the theme of Matthew's theology bound up as it is with date and covenant, and the continuity between old Israel and the people of God.

Volume II deals with Acts to Revelation, divided up into seven parts: 1: Introducing the letters and the Apocalypse where he cautions quite rightly about giving Paul too dominant a role among the church leaders and apostolic figures of the early church (p5) and elucidates his chief impulse to treating his letters as pastoral (p8), using traditional catechetical material, sharing an understanding of the OT, dealing with dangerous types of teaching and attempting to explain the nature of the Christian life.

Part 2 gives "the setting of the NT in Graeco-Roman civilisation" where he owes his debt to H. Carey Oakley in Evangelica 1 (1962). Part 3 deals with Acts under the heading "Cameos of the Early Church" (51-69) where he suggests Luke wrote in the 80s but used sources going back to 40-50 and includes a valuable discussion on Stephen (84-89) though he does not attempt to deal with the problem of the Samaritan mission of Philip and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. Contrary to more usual views of the three accounts of Paul's conversion in chapters 9, 22, 26 he suggests the variation was deliberate on Luke's part.

Parts 4/5 deal with the Pauline Corpus of letters where he suggests no final decision can be made on whether Paul writes to North or South Galatia or on the place of imprisonment mentioned in the letter to the Philippians (pp156, 205). Luke, in Dr Martin's view, wrote Ephesians under the aegis of Paul (230-233), an interesting attempt to solve a much-debated problem. Paul's letters were not pieces of ephemeral correspondence but were charged with apostolic power, being "an extension of his person, a means of conveying apostolic authority" (p247). The originality of the apostolate lies in the exercise of authority in the church, especially in the custodianship of the oral and written traditions (p283). Martin accepts Badcock's view that 1 Timothy was possibly written by Luke (Luke seems too ready an answer to authorship problems!)

Part 6 deals with other NT writings including 1 Peter which, it is claimed, was published with Peter's authoris-



ation and represents his own apostolic preaching. He accepts Bornkamm's argument as to the liturgical character of Hebrews ( His title to the discussion on Hebrews 'The Pilgrim People of God' recalls Ernst Käsemann's "Das wandernde Gottesvolk" (1953)) and offers his solution to the literary problem of the letter by giving the tentative definition of a baptismal homily. If this is so, it is a heavy piece of writing for a new convert.

Finally in Part 7, he gives us "The Sum of the Matter", setting out for us what he conceives to be the central message of the NT. He refuses to accept as central the justification of the ungodly, 'Being-in-Christ', salvation, history of salvation, or existentialist mythology, but, acknowledging his indebtedness to T.W.Manson, accepts the central theme as reconciliation.

These are two excellent volumes for any student wishing to be brought up to date on NT issues and yet appreciative of a positive and fresh approach to its problems.

E.A.R.

H. Marshall: The Gospel of Luke      The New International Greek commentary.  
 Paternoster Press, 1978      pp928      £13.00 pb

This is the first commentary in the New International Greek Testament commentary series of which the joint editors are I.H. Marshall and W.W. Gasque. The aim of the series is to cater for students of the Greek text, "to serve those engaged in the ministry of the Word of God and thus to glorify His name" (p14). It is also intended to harvest the results of research in a more easily accessible form (p13). This massive commentary will make considerable demands on minister and student of the Scriptures alike with its formidable array of names (some 605 are quoted in the bibliography!), scattered throughout the commentary and its very concentrated style.

If we may give an example of the kind of treatment, we may take the phrase from Luke 1:3, "to write an orderly account for you". The word for "orderly" or "in order" is Kathexēs. Dr Marshall's note is as follows:

"Luke was then ready to write his book, describing the events kathexēs, i.e. 'in order, one thing after another' (Acts 11:4, 18:23) or 'as follows', 'the following' (8:1; Acts 3:24\*\*). The latter meaning is inappropriate here (pace Cadbury, BCII, 504f). With the former meaning the adverb may be taken to imply chronological exactitude or simply an orderly and lucid narrative. Luke's actual procedure may seem to rule out the idea of chronological exactitude, but although he is not interested in assigning precise dates and places to the events he records he is broadly chronological in his treatment (cf. Schürmann, I, 12f; and earlier commentators). F. Müssner ('Kathexēs im Lukasprolog', in Ellis, Jesus, 253-255) adopts the meaning 'in order, i.e. without omitting anything'. M. Völkelt ('Exegetische Erwägungen zum Verständnis des Begriffs kathexēs im lukanischen Prolog, NTS 20, 1973-74, 289-299) argues that the word implies the continuity of items within a logical whole, so that Luke's aim is to show that the story of Jesus, taken as a whole, makes sense and is therefore worthy of belief. G. Schneider\* suggests that the continuity

of events in a salvation-historical scheme of promise and fulfilment is meant."

Thus on this one word we have no less than the judgment of four scholars with interpretations that lend themselves effectively to exposition. The placing of German titles of articles within the text instead of relegating them to notes can be frustrating for the non-German-speaking student but perhaps this would have been time-consuming. It would however probably have helped the presentation of the commentary, and made for easier reading.

Dr Marshall, in a review of Professor E.E.Ellis's commentary on Luke in the New Century Bible series (1966), described it as a 'Do-it-yourself' commentary (if I remember correctly). Here in this lengthy commentary (the only other commentary in English to rival it in length that I have found is that by F.Godet—some 900 pages), representing a sustained period of painstaking and careful work and research, Dr Marshall "does-it-for-us" and students who wish for a reliable guide on the Greek text in English which is sensibly conservative can hardly do better than study this work.

It may be regretted that, probably due to the immense length of the commentary, the introduction is slight (some eight pages out of 928) though as Dr Marshall points out, his book "Luke, Historian and Theologian" (1970) can make up this deficiency. Problems are not set aside but given full—sometimes over-full?—consideration, and an honest appraisal given, e.g., that on the hymns in Chs 1 and 2, including the Magnificat and the Benedictus: 'The hymns attributed to some of the principal actors are unlikely to have been spontaneous expressions, but serve like the speeches in ancient histories to express the significance of the moment in appropriate language' (p46). The problem of the two forms of the Lord's Prayer has given rise to endless debate. Dr Marshall agrees with the textual critic, Bruce Metzger that the Lucan or shorter form is the original. Either the prayer existed in two forms or Matthew augmented the Lucan form for liturgical purposes (p454f).

The problem of the Lucan text of the institution of the Lord's Supper is dealt with and along with Jeremies and Schurmann (Dr Marshall leans greatly on both scholars) there is acceptance of the longer text (for the argument see p799f).

A generally accepted date for the writing of Luke is 80AD,



... on the ground that Luke seems to have known of the fall of Jerusalem. Dr Marshall claims that Luke shows a complete lack of interest in the fall of Jerusalem, i.e. it was not taken place, and dates the gospel in 70 AD. (p35). In relation to the Synoptic problem, he does accept that Matthew and L had come together before Luke used them along with Mark. He does not however feel that the existence of a Proto-Luke can be proved ('Luke, Historian and Theologian', p. 22).

The discussion of the pivotal text 16:16 ("The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the Kingdom of God is preached and everyone enters it violently"), which Conzelman used as part of his basis for suggesting that Luke had a threefold division of salvation history (the periods (i) up until John (ii) of Jesus and (iii) of the church), leads Dr Marshall to claim that the Baptist was included in the period of the preaching of the good news. This however is by no means certain. The evidence in Matthew and Luke is ambiguous though John's Gospel makes him a witness to Jesus.

It is impossible in a review like this to deal with all the points of debate in this commentary. We have shown something, however, of the care and completeness of Dr Marshall's approach. It fulfils well the object which the editors put before themselves. We may only hope that successive commentaries will maintain this standard.

Union Theological College,  
Glasgow

E.A.R.

Nicholas Lash: Theology on Dover Beach

Darton, Longman & Todd 1979 pp 187  
£3.95

"Theology on Dover Beach" is a collection of essays, written at different times and for different purposes, by Nicholas Lash, the recently appointed Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge (The Norrisian and Hulsean chairs were amalgamated in 1934 under F.C. Burkitt, and has been held subsequently by C.H. Dodd, H.H. Farkitt).

mer and D.M. MacKinnon. Nicholas Lash is the first Roman Catholic to be appointed to the chair).

A number of the essays have appeared previously in the Irish Theological Quarterly and most of the material has been previously published in various journals. Lash recognizes that a collection of material such as we find in this volume may lack the unity and coherence necessary to make it a useful and readable book. He tells us that he selected these particular pieces because, for all the variety of their themes and levels of treatment, they seemed to me to illustrate two enduring preoccupations: an attempt to grapple with problems arising from the historical character of Christian faith and a conviction that, far from surrendering its critical integrity and (relative) autonomy, Christian theological reflection is dependent upon, secondary to, Christian faith and practice.

These are certainly the two basic themes of the essays, though I found that the chosen format of the book left me tantalizingly dissatisfied with the suggestive but not fully developed approaches to a consideration of the issues involved. One of the strengths of the author, however, is that this theology is carried on in conversation with fellow-theologians, a factor, however, which also makes considerable demands on the reader who is expected to be familiar with their writings also and their methodological stances. There is a 'specialist' tone to the volume, but it does allow us to see with refreshing openness how a creative theological mind sets about its work.

Not that Lash might approve this way of expressing things. In an opening introductory essay he takes issue with Maurice Wiles on the historical nature of Christianity, arguing that Christian forms of faith in God do indeed stand or fall by certain particular historical happenings in the past, and that some of the centrally constitutive claims of Christian belief are therefore in principle vulnerable to falsification. He is at pains to stress throughout the 'risk-laden' character of Christian faith, and insists that Christian believing is not fundamentally a matter of holding, theoretically, certain convictions which have implications for action and conduct, but is rather a 'way of life', a form of practical engagement with theoretical implications. Thus the safeguards of faith are to be sought in fidelity, in love, in purity of action.

The emphasis on the primacy of practice surfaces throughout the book, leading Lash, for example, at one point to deny

It there are any timeless expressions of theological truth, as there is an 'incarnate' nature to all human expressions of meaning and truth. This, he argues, does not open the floodgates to an unrestrained relativity so that in speaking about God, we can say whatever we like, wherever and whenever we like, to whomever we like. But it equally implies that we cannot simply repeat what our predecessors said, on the untroubled assumption that in so doing we shall today be truly speaking of God. The same concern to take due account of the existential situation of the person, is vividly portrayed in one of the most interesting and lucid of the essays, entitled "Can a theologian keep the faith?", in which Lash, in dialogue with P. Van Buren and V.A. Harvey, discusses the options open to a believer who becomes reflectively aware of what he is 'doing' in believing, and faced with a feeling of being obliged to stop doing it.

The essays in the book have been arranged in four sections. Part one, which gives the title to the book, was an inaugural lecture delivered at Cambridge University in 1978, in which Lash argues for a 'critical theology', for a discipline whose principal function is to attempt to give theoretical, critical expression to the interactions between 'science' and 'policy', between scholarship and strategies of Christian living. Part two, sub-titled 'pluralism and discontinuity', deals with the sense in which Christianity is a 'historical' religion, the relationship between faith and theological reflection, and the problem of historical interpretation, of 'hermeneutics'. The final essay in this part is of a more informal, personal nature than the rest of the collection. Under the title 'Should Christianity be credible?', Lash deals movingly with the problem of religious certitude, concluding that it is in prayer and in the "common life of the body of Christ", more fundamentally than in the quest for theoretical or historical certainty, that the sustaining and deepening of Christian conviction is to be sought.

Part three looks at a variety of theological methods, with essays on M. Wiles, Hans Küng and J.H. Newman, the thought of the latter having profoundly influenced Lash. If the first three parts of the book have been primarily concerned with problems of method, in the final Part Lash seeks to put his own method to work in respect of certain aspects of the doctrines of salvation, divine providence and eternal life. In relation to his thought on the last subject, Lash has been accused of being a latter-day Sadducee; he seeks to refute the charge though whether he does so convincingly, remains



doubtful to this reviewer. But Lash faces clearly the objections that can be raised to his particular position. He does not hold with the idea that any one man can come up with answers or solutions to our common problems.

His essays are offered as genuine 'essais', 'attempts' or contributions to a discussion. As such they are to be warmly welcomed. We can hopefully look forward to the same kind of imaginative, constructive theological reflection, perhaps more fully developed, during the author's work in Cambridge.

Stranmillis College,  
Belfast.

R.N.Brown

W.McKane:

Studies in the Patriarchal Narratives

Handsel Press, Edinburgh 1979 pp x + 262  
£5.50

A book by one of Britain's leading scholars on one of the most controversial areas in OT studies is much to be welcomed. The scholarly consensus about the nature and composition of the patriarchal narratives has been severely shaken recently by the works of T.L.Thompson, J.van Seters and R. Rendtorff. It is widely supposed that the patriarchal stories accurately reflect the social customs of the early second millenium BC, and that this supports the basic historicity of the patriarchs. It is also held that Genesis, like the rest of the Pentateuch, is composed of documentary sources, each containing an account of the patriarchs. Thompson and van Seters have challenged the former proposition, asserting that the parallels between the patriarchs and early Mesopotamian customs have been overdrawn and that in some instances closer parallels may be found in late first-millenium material. Rendtorff has questioned the second proposition, arguing instead that Genesis is composed of blocks of tradition, one block dealing with Abraham, another with Isaac, another with Jacob and so on.

McKane mentions these recent studies in his preface and introduction. He concurs with those scholars who have argued that many of the alleged parallels between the patriarchal narratives and other material have been overdrawn.

He justly accuses Gordon and Speiser of some arbitrariness in their rewriting of some of the patriarchal narratives to make them fit alleged external parallels. Extrabiblical data can no more justify cutting up the text than other critical methods. But this is not the main thrust of McKane's work. He holds that both those who advocate the historicity of the patriarchs on the basis of archaeological parallels and those who deny the validity of these parallels have missed the main point: to what genre do the patriarchal narratives belong? If they are historiographical, we can be sure that the figures in them are historical. If they are not, umpteen extrabiblical parallels will never prove the historicity of the patriarchs, for fiction is true to the age in which it is written. Accurate portrayal of social customs does not show that the characters described were anything more than creatures of the author's imagination.

The rest of the book attempts to shed light on the genre of the patriarchal narratives by summarizing some of the earlier discussions. Chapter 1, "The History of the Genre", is devoted to the work of Gunkel and, much more briefly, Westermann. In the first edition of his Genesis commentary Gunkel held that the patriarchal narratives were sagas; in the third edition that they were derived from fairy tales (Märchen) and therefore in no way historical. Westermann recognizes the antiquity of the patriarchal narratives in classifying them as family stories. But McKane doubts whether this classification implies historicity.

Eissfeldt is the main scholar discussed in chapter 2, "The Narratives as Tribal History". He held that Abraham was a historical individual, but that the other patriarchs were simply personifications of tribes. McKane draws attention to the apparent inconsistency of allowing Abraham's individuality but denying that of his sons and grandsons.

Chapter 3, "The History of the Tradition", describes the work of Noth, Hoftijzer, Jepsen and others, who have used Traditionsgeschichte to interpret the patriarchal narratives. Whereas Gunkel held that the stories were originally simple folktales that later were given a religious slant, Noth argued that their origin was cultic and that they were later secularized. For Gunkel aetiological features were secondary, for Noth primary, features of the

patriarchal traditions.

Chapters 4 and 5, "The Religion of the Patriarchs", and "Some Theological Considerations", are shorter than the preceding ones. Again McKane is mainly concerned with describing other scholars' opinions rather than evaluating them. However Cross's essay in Harvard Theological Review in 1962 is sharply criticized, though his fuller treatment of the subject in Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (1973) is overlooked.

This book is evidently the fruit of much painstaking study on a most important theme, yet it is not easy to read. McKane is far too fair to the scholars whose work he describes. He presents the reader with a kaleidoscopic array of diverse opinions, but rarely does he tell us what he thinks, so that at the end one is still wondering about the genre of the patriarchal narratives. I was left with the impression that McKane does believe in the historicity of at least some of the patriarchs, but that he is hesitant about many of the arguments used in support of such a position. Though I would endorse such a conclusion, I was disappointed that in this book McKane does not discuss in detail the work of Thompson, van Seters and Rendtorff. The forthcoming volume edited by D.J. Wiseman, Abraham and His Time, to which I have contributed, will address these questions more directly.

Queen's University,  
Belfast.

Gordon J. Wenham



## Contributors

D.R.G.Beattie, Lecturer in the Dept of Semitic Studies in Queen's University; author of "Jewish Exegesis in the book of Ruth"(Sheffield, 1977).

Professor C.E.B.Cranfield, University of Durham; author of 1,2 Peter(Torch Commentary,1960) Mark (Cambridge,1959) Romans( T & T Clark, Vols I and II,1975 and 1979),various articles in theological journals.

H.Cressey Professor of Systematic Theology, Westminster College, Cambridge.



## Contributors

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All contributions should be sent direct to the Editor, at      Union Theological College  
                    Botanic Avenue  
                    Belfast BT7 1JT

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